

GNATS

a musical follow-the-leader game for two or three oboes


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Performance Notes:

1. Players read from the score which is divided into parts I, II, and III, arranged horizontally one above the other.
2. Parts are read left to right (except at vertical arrows), beginning with measure 1, and disregarding spaces (e.g. measure 6 proceeds to measure 7). The piece ends when one of four possible endings has been reached.
3. Measures with arrows leading out are places where choices are made as to which route to follow to one of the four endings. Players may therefore move up or down as well as continue left to right at these places. After moving up or down to a new route players must continue left to right until a new choice is made or one of the endings is reached.
4. Each numbered measure along a route must be played at least once, but may be played as many times as a player wishes. Once a measure is exited, however, it cannot be replayed. Players may never move right to left (except within a divided measure).
5. Figures in measures divided with a dotted line must first be played in order; thereafter, players may freely omit figures, repeat figures at will, or play in any order.
6. Dynamics, tempo, musical expression, and repetitions of measures and figures are at the discretion of the players. Breathing between figures is ad lib but should not take as much time as a notated rest. All trills are to the half step above. Diagonal line between note heads indicates a pitch bend. 
7. At the measures with arrows leading out, players make choices as to which direction to go. One player at each such measure is the leader. The leader is the player with his/her own part number printed in a circle above the measure. All other players must move in the same direction (i.e. to the same numbered measure) on their own parts. To do this, the two other non-leaders at that point follow the part of the player whose number is printed in a circle above the junction measure. For example, at measure 2, player I makes the decision as to which direction to go because player I's own number is in the circle above that measure. At the same time player II must follow the direction by watching player I's part (player I's number is in the circle above measure 2 in player II's part). Player III follows player II (who is following player I) at that point (player II's number is in the circle above that measure in player III's part). In another example, at measure 4, player II is the leader and both players I and III must pay attention to what happens at that point by watching player II's part and playing the corresponding measure on their own part. In this way all players will move in the same direction, taking the same route and each will at some time take turns being the leader. Following another player's part while playing his/her own part will tend to create a slight delay which is desirable.
8. If a player reaches a junction measure before the leader arrives there, that player must wait for the leader by “vamping”. Only the designated leader may first move forward from a junction. Thereafter, each player may proceed at his/own pace.
9. The piece ends when all players have played one of the four last measures. Players do not necessarily have to end together.
10. The over all intention of this piece is of controlled improvisation where players who have printed music are encouraged to pay closer attention to each other than usual and to collectively make musical decisions at the time of the performance. It is therefore vital that all players are able to follow each others' movements and directions and should also be aware of each leader's use of expression. In addition, players are free to create, through repetition and playful interaction with each other, an appropriate length in keeping with the dynamics of the audience as well.

Poland, Maine 5/17/2008

First performance: Katherine Gunn, Elizabeth Sullivan, Evan Tammen; University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, April 21, 2012

Pieces in this series:

Butterflies for two or three flutes

Gnats for two or three oboes

Grasshoppers for two or three tenor saxophones

Dragonflies for two or three clarinets

Centipedes for two or three bassoons

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I

Part I is a musical score for a single melodic line, spanning 30 measures. It begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The notation includes various rhythmic values such as eighth, sixteenth, and thirty-second notes, as well as rests. Trills are indicated by 'tr' above notes in measures 2, 4, 13, 16, 24, and 30. Fingerings are specified with circled Roman numerals: I for measures 2, 7, 9, 10, 12, 14, 16, 22, 28, and 30; II for measures 3, 4, 11, 13, 19, 21, 23, 27, and 29. Measure 11 features a complex sixteenth-note passage. Measure 20 contains a series of sixteenth-note rests marked 'n.<'. Measure 27 includes a triplet of sixteenth notes. The score concludes with a final trill in measure 30.

II

Part II is a musical score for a single melodic line, spanning 30 measures. It begins with a treble clef and a key signature of two sharps (D major). The notation includes various rhythmic values such as eighth, sixteenth, and thirty-second notes, as well as rests. Trills are indicated by 'tr' above notes in measures 2, 4, 13, 16, 24, and 30. Fingerings are specified with circled Roman numerals: I for measures 2, 7, 9, 10, 12, 14, 16, 22, 28, and 30; II for measures 3, 4, 11, 13, 19, 21, 23, 27, and 29. Measure 11 features a complex sixteenth-note passage. Measure 20 contains a series of sixteenth-note rests marked 'n.<'. Measure 27 includes a triplet of sixteenth notes. The score concludes with a final trill in measure 30.

III

Part III is a musical score for a single melodic line, spanning 30 measures. It begins with a treble clef and a key signature of two flats (B-flat major). The notation includes various rhythmic values such as eighth, sixteenth, and thirty-second notes, as well as rests. Trills are indicated by 'tr' above notes in measures 2, 4, 13, 16, 24, and 30. Fingerings are specified with circled Roman numerals: II for measures 2, 7, 9, 10, 12, 14, 16, 22, 28, and 30; III for measures 3, 4, 11, 13, 19, 21, 23, 27, and 29. Measure 11 features a complex sixteenth-note passage. Measure 20 contains a series of sixteenth-note rests marked 'n.<'. Measure 27 includes a triplet of sixteenth notes. The score concludes with a final trill in measure 30.